

# Atlanta Freethought News

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## Our November Meeting

Our November 10 AFS meeting will include a speech by **Dr. Scott Lilienfeld**, professor of psychology at Emory University. His talk will be on "false memories".

Dr. Lilienfeld received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Minnesota in 1990. He has been a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Emory since 1994. He has written articles for many publications. His field of interest includes personality disorders, anxiety disorders and behavior psychopathology.

The AFS meeting will be at 1:00 at the **AFS Center**, Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north past I-285 by 8 miles to Exit 7B, which is GA-140. Take GA-140 (Holcomb Bridge Road) west about 1 mile and turn left at Grimes Bridge Road. Go 0.2 miles to 1170 Grimes Bridge Rd., which is on the right.



## SOS Meets at AFS Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the AFS Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30 PM. SOS is the secular replacement for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

## Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** will have their next meeting at 12:30 PM on December 1 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see [www.fellowshipofreason.com](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com).

## Email Version of AFNews

The Atlanta Freethought News is now available by email in Adobe Acrobat® format. Please consider receiving your newsletter this way; it will save AFS about \$1.00 per newsletter.

To receive AFNews by email, request this issue in an email to [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com). If there is any problem, just let Steve know and he can return you to the paper mailing list.

## AFS Meetings and Activities

Nov 9: AFS Hike, Chattahoochee River Rec. Area, 11:00.  
Nov 10: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.  
Nov 15: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.  
Nov 17: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.

## AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will meet on Sunday, November 17, from 4 to 6 PM at the AFS Center.

The **AFS Hike** will be on Saturday, November 9, at 11:00 at the Island Ford Branch of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north to the Northridge Road exit. Stay in the right lane and cross over I-400, then take an immediate right onto Dunwoody Place. Go right at the second light on Roberts Drive. The park entrance is on the right less than a mile ahead. Meet at the end of the road. For info, call Lew Southern at 770-509-8272.

The next **AFS Social** will be at Las Margaritas Restaurant at 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road (Atlanta) on Friday, November 15, at 7:00 PM.

To get there from the north, take I-85 to the Cheshire Bridge Road exit (Exit 88). Turn left at the light and go about 1.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the right.

To get there from the south, take Piedmont Rd. north to Cheshire Bridge Road. Turn right at Cheshire Bridge Road and go about 0.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the left.

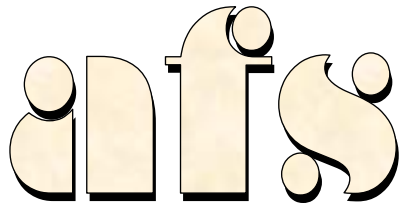
## The Tuesday Lunch Bunch

A group of AFS members meets every Tuesday at 12:00 at Panahar Restaurant. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company.

## The Godless Americans March

The Godless Americans March occurred in Washington on Saturday, November 2. Several AFS members were there, and speeches by many atheist/freethought leaders were given. Unfortunately, we have little information on the march for publication in this issue of AFNews. Some members have expressed concern that virtually no TV networks and almost no newspapers covered the event. So far, we've seen only two newspaper articles on the event; they were in the San Francisco Chronicle and the Washington Post. The Post said that "about 2,000 atheists and other nonbelievers marched on the Mall to protest what they say is increasing infringement of religion in governmental affairs. Staging their first Godless Americans March on Washington, the demonstrators said they wanted to show that Americans who do not believe in God or who doubt the existence of a supreme deity comprise a significant part of the population that needs to be taken more seriously."

Larry Darby reported that CSPAN recorded the event, but did not broadcast the event live. They may air the event some time in the future.



**Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society**

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AFS Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Nov 10: Dr. Scott Lilienfeld, professor of psychology at Emory University, will speak on false memories.

Dec 8: Sharon Reynolds, a registered nurse, will speak on the pros and cons of alternative medicine and related legislative issues.

Jan 12: TBD

Feb 9: TBD

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to [AFSforum-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:AFSforum-subscribe@yahoo.com). To join the AFS Announcements list, send a blank email to [afs-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:afs-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com). To join the Georgia Freethinkers Letter Writing Cooperative, send a blank email to [flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoo.com).

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to [xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoo.com).

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the advantages of living life free of religious dogma through speeches, debates, discussions, protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or, especially, lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion, primarily through having a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs and by maintaining and using our own extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

**Atlanta Freethought News  
an AFS publication**

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Steve Yothment

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**The Atlanta Freethought News**

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For membership and subscription  
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# The Judge Moore Trial

The Judge Moore trial finally occurred on October 15 through the 23<sup>rd</sup> in federal court in Montgomery, AL. In a lawsuit filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the plaintiffs sought the removal of the 5,300-pound granite Ten Commandments monument from the lobby of the Alabama Judicial Building that Chief Justice Roy Moore had placed there.

Legal experts say the case could eventually be the one the U.S. Supreme Court uses to decide if such monuments in and around government buildings are constitutional.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson says he will render a verdict on the case by November 18.

The monument features two stone tablets containing the commandments on a granite block that includes quotes from historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Jay.

In a pre-trial interview, Richard Cohen, legal director for the Southern Poverty Law Center, said Moore's actions violate the First Amendment, which prohibits the government from promoting religion. The majority of U.S. Supreme Court decisions in similar cases since 1947 generally have held that religious displays in governmental settings are unconstitutional unless part of a larger secular historical context, Cohen said.

"Judge Moore, as chief justice, has a duty to uphold not only Alabama law but federal law, and Judge Moore knows that federal law prohibits him from doing what he is doing," Cohen said. "The essential problem is that Judge Moore is unable to separate his personal beliefs from his role as a public official."

In an "Atheists Breakfast" immediately before the trial, Larry Darby, state director for American Atheists (and AFS member), expressed his concern to reporters about the monument. "This is a country for all people, not just radical Christians," Larry said.

In his opening statement, law center co-founder Morris Dees said Moore had campaigned on the pledge that he would "acknowledge God" if elected to the Supreme Court because he was "on a personal mission from God."

Herb Titus of Coral Ridge Ministries, representing Moore, said in his opening statement that the lawsuit was part of an effort to "censor God."

Stephen Glassroth, one of the plaintiffs in the case, testified on the first day of the trial that he was shocked when the 4-foot-tall display was placed in the rotunda of the State Judicial Building. "Moore's display would be fine in a house of worship, but it's wholly inappropriate in a government facility," he said.

Much of the first three days of the trial included testimony by Judge Moore about the monument. He said that he considers the monument to represent "the moral foundation of law."

On the second day of the trial, Rich Hobson, head of the Alabama Administrative Office of Courts, was called to the stand. Hobson testified that he prays at the monument and that he has invited his church members to come there and pray at the monument.

At the start of the third day of the trial, Judge Myron Thompson told Moore that he was beginning to understand his point of view on church-state separation. "I really do want to understand," Thompson told Moore's lawyers. "It's beginning to gel. I think I'm beginning to understand where he's coming from, what he's doing and why he's doing it."

Among other things, Moore testified that he believes that the nation is losing its morality, and that this can be seen in the behavior of its elected officials and of its business leaders.

Also on the third day of trial, many pictures of religious references on government property were introduced and accepted into evidence, apparently in an attempt to justify the placement of the monument in the State

Judicial Building.

In an October 19 article in the Montgomery Advertiser, the paper noted that "Justice Roy Moore opened wide his personal font of knowledge on God, government and law, flooding U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson's courtroom with his arguments why the Ten Commandments belong in the state Judicial Building."

"In vintage Moore style, Alabama's top jurist reeled off quote after quote from dozens of sources, from George Washington to the Bible to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas to 16th century British philosopher John Locke to Thomas Jefferson's "Letter to the Dansbury Baptists."

"Moore used all that and much more to support his claim that America's founders never intended to separate God from government in the First Amendment. In fact, it's God that provides all of our freedoms, not the laws of men, Moore said."

The testimony on that Friday included a conversation between Moore and District Judge Thompson.

"What you're telling me and others is that we have a separation of church and state, but not a separation of God and state?" Thompson asked.

Moore: "Right."

Thompson: "God himself is over both?"

Moore: "That's exactly right."

Thompson: "Both the state and church fall under the sovereignty of God?"

Moore: "Right."

Thompson: "You couldn't really have the state unless you have God?"

Moore: "Right. That God. Who that God is is so important. It's the God of the Holy Scriptures."

Thompson: "When you refer to 'that God,' you mean the Judeo-Christian God?"

Moore: "Yes, the God that both the Jews and Christians worship."

Thompson: "Why is that significant?"

*(continued on page 4)*

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## The Judge Moore Trial *(continued)*

Moore: "Any faith that worships a different God doesn't worship the God that gave us freedom of conscience."

Thompson: "The Judeo-Christian God is at the top in that he has given freedom of conscience to worship other gods and pursue other religions?"

Moore: "Right. If it wasn't the Judeo-Christian God, then what they are accusing us of doing would be true."

Outside the courthouse shortly after that exchange, attorney Ayesha Khan of Americans United said Moore's theory helps the plaintiffs prove their argument that the chief justice is using his official position to endorse one religion over others.

"I think it helps me understand his views and I think it helps the judge understand," Khan said. "What he doesn't show is compassion for people who do not share his views that a Christian God is the source of all our liberties," Khan said. "It confirms very strongly that his monument is a sectarian stating of his views that this is a Christian nation. It confirms why the plaintiffs feel unwelcome when they walk into the Judicial Building."

In the courtroom, however, Moore testified that he is not trying to impose his views on anyone. "I command no one to pray," Moore said.

Also on that Friday, Thompson asked Moore why his placement of the monument wasn't an intrusion by a government official into the area of religion.

Moore, quoting Jefferson's "Bill for Religious Freedom," said the monument didn't violate the jurisdiction of religion because it didn't "prescribe the duties man owes to God, nor describe how those duties were to be carried out."

On the fourth day of the trial, others testified for and against the monument. Michael Novak, who specializes in religion and culture working for the American Enterprise Institute, testified that those who framed the Constitution and the First

Amendment thought it was essential that government acknowledge the Jewish-Christian God as the source of all individual liberties. Moore's monument does that, Novak said. "The blessings of liberty will not be present unless there is a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles," said Novak. "The government should consistently note the source of that belief because if it weakens in public it becomes ineffectual."

The other witness was Edwin Gaustad, a professor emeritus of history and religion at the University of California Riverside. He testified that James Madison and Thomas Jefferson — the two men most responsible for the First Amendment — believed government and religion ought to be kept as far apart as possible.

"Chief Justice Moore was saying that it was written to protect the role of God in government, that the purpose of the First Amendment was to protect the government to make public proclamations on God," Gaustad said. "I disagree. It was to protect the religious liberties of the citizens of the new nation."

"Moore's stance stands history on its head. If you consult any reputable historian they would find it a gross misstatement of the purpose of the First Amendment," Gaustad continued. "It is to protect the religious liberties of its citizens, not promote a public piety."

Novak and Gaustad also disagreed on whether the monument amounts to an establishment of religion based on the definition of religion used during the nation's founding: "the duties owed to God and the manner those duties are discharged, reached by reason and conviction, not by force or compulsion."

Novak said the monument could be seen as a duty owed to God, but no one was forcing anyone to take it as the gospel. "This is not establishing religion, but cherishing and supporting religion," he said.

Gaustad, however, said he believes

the Ten Commandments monument placed in the rotunda represents "a psychological force" that implies "the judicial power or authority is going to follow a particular religious line. The government at this point is using its power to back the Ten Commandments."

Judge Thompson asked Gaustad if it would make the monument permissible "if there was a disclaimer at the bottom of the monument saying, 'We're not compelling anyone to believe.'"

"The disclaimer would help," Gaustad said. "Moving it to private property would help more."

Gaustad also disagreed with Moore's testimony that the God of the Bible created the principle of separation of church and state. Gaustad said Jefferson and other framers of the Constitution referred to "the God of nature" rather than the God of Christians and Jews when they referred to God or the Creator.

On Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the trial, a University of Tulsa law professor testified that the Bible and the Ten Commandments played only a minor role in the development of American law. Paul Finkelman, testifying as an expert on American constitutional law and history, said the nation's founders mentioned Roman, British and European continental law but not the Bible or the Ten Commandments during their debates on the Constitution.

"The Ten Commandments represent a tiny slice of the heritage of American law," said Finkelman. "No respected scholar of legal history would assert that the Ten Commandments have played a dominant or major role, or even a very significant role, in the development of American law as a whole."

The trial concluded on Wednesday, October 23. Thompson said he will reach a decision by Nov. 18. He indicated that he already has a good idea on how he will begin writing his opinion on the case, borrowing on an idea provided by Moore's lead attorney,

*(continued on page 5)*



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## The Judge Moore Trial *(continued)*

Stephen Melchior.

"I think I'll start my opinion, 'The issue here is: Can the state acknowledge God?'" Thompson said. Thompson, however, gave no indication of how he will decide the case.

In her closing arguments, plaintiffs' attorney Ayesha Khan of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, contended that the main issue Thompson has to consider would be better framed as: "This case is about whether God can be acknowledged by the state in this way."

U.S. Supreme Court rulings have held that "ceremonial deisms" like Thanksgiving proclamations offered by presidents and legislative prayers are permissible because they refer to no specific God and are "ephemeral, not permanent," Khan said. Moore's two-ton granite monument in the rotunda of the Judicial Building is "an obtrusive year-round display" that pays tribute to the Judeo-Christian God of Moore's faith to the exclusion of all others, she said.

In his closing arguments, Melchior argued that the monument is merely recognition of America's religious and legal heritage, not a law. "I beg anyone to tell me what Chief Justice Moore has done in that rotunda is making a law," Melchior said. "He's taken a monument, stuck it in the rotunda and said it's the moral foundation of law and acknowledged God

as the source. How is that a law? How is that compelling anyone what to believe? He just reminded us. He made no law."

But Judge Thompson replied, "He's the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama! When he said 'put that monument in that building,' isn't that the force of law? No private citizen can remove it. Why isn't that a law? He is the authority of the state of Alabama that allows that monument to sit there and he put it there."

The plaintiffs' attorney Ayesha Khan said in closing remarks that, while some of the founders were undoubtedly religious men, it's clear they would not have approved of a large monument featuring the Ten Commandments in the lobby of a state judicial building.

"The founders felt strongly that religion was sacred and government must neither hinder nor help it," Khan said.

Larry Darby (also a lawyer) sat through the complete trial, and reported to the AFS Forum email list that he thinks that Moore will lose the case. "Moore has made a damning case against his monument," Darby said. "The chief justice ... came across as exactly the kind of religious zealot that the plaintiffs claim he is ... The legal case against the monument is a slam-dunk. Federal law is clear."

Some have indicated that, no matter

the verdict, the case may be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. (In fact, Judge Thompson said in court that he expects it.) If the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear the case, Judge Moore will have to present his case to the same court that he has accused of eroding the nation's moral values because it doesn't allow government-sponsored prayer in public schools.

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### LEGAL FEES IN HAMILTON COUNTY

In a related story, county commissioners in Chattanooga, TN are trying to decide how to pay legal bills after losing a federal court fight to post the Ten Commandments on the walls of their courthouse.

The Hamilton County, TN officials ordered the plaques erected after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Last May, a federal judge found that they violated the constitutional separation of church and state and ordered them taken down. He also ordered them to pay plaintiffs' legal fees. Combined with their own attorneys' fees, the county owes \$78,000 to lawyers. Commissioners are considering selling the plaques to help pay the bills.

Judge Moore, who is using private money to finance his defense, may face a stiffer judgment. If he loses in U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson's court, and appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court and loses, his expenses would be significantly higher.



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# Americans United Press Releases

## VOTER GUIDES NOT FOR CHURCHES

In a press release on November 1, Americans United for Separation of Church and State said that the Christian Coalition's 2002 "voter guides" are biased, partisan campaign materials and have no place in America's houses of worship.

Americans United was concerned that the Christian Coalition would be asking religious leaders nationwide to distribute campaign guides to congregations in the hopes of influencing the outcome of races nationwide.

Because federal tax law prohibits churches and other non-profit groups from intervening in partisan political campaigns, the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, said clergy should reject the Coalition's advances.

"America's religious leaders shouldn't touch the Christian Coalition's campaign materials with a ten-foot pole," Lynn said. "The Coalition is trying to rope churches into a political machine to advance its partisan agenda. Pastors should see through the Coalition's scheme and keep their sanctuaries clear of slanted political fliers."

The Christian Coalition holds a type of tax-exempt status that allows it to endorse candidates and get involved in partisan politics within certain limits. Churches, however, are absolutely barred from endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, and therefore cannot distribute campaign materials that favor some candidates over others.

As they have been for many years, the Coalition's 2002 voter guides are stacked to favor Republican candidates. Issues such as abortion, private religious school vouchers and school-sponsored prayer — topics the Coalition has well-known positions on — are carefully selected by the group to help the favored candidate.

"The guides select specific issues to make the Republican a saint and the Democrat a sinner," Lynn said. "Just as importantly, the guides phrase the issues in a biased fashion, and then give misleading and sometimes wrong information. These guides don't belong in churches, they belong in the recycling bin."

"A church that distributes campaign fliers may be inviting scrutiny from the Internal Revenue Service. Unfortunately, it won't be the Christian Coalition that gets in legal trouble; it will be houses of worship that are left holding the bag."

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## CHURCH ENDORSEMENTS

Americans United for Separation of Church and State says that Church endorsements of political candidates in Texas and Maryland should be investigated by the Internal Revenue Service.

In letters to the IRS on November 4, Americans United cited two reports of church electioneering at Sunday services last weekend.

Said Americans United Executive Director Barry W. Lynn, "Federal tax law is clear: Churches and other tax-exempt organizations may not intervene in elections on behalf of candidates.

"Church personnel and resources are supposed to be used for religious and charitable purposes," continued Lynn, "not electioneering."

Americans United told the IRS that details from the two incidents clearly merit attention from tax authorities.

In Texas, the Rev. Joe Samuel Ratliff, pastor of the Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, endorsed the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate during services at the church. According to the Dallas Morning News, Ratliff urged his 8,000-member congregation to help candidate Ron Kirk make history.

"Go up and down the ballot and vote your conscience," Ratliff said. "But in that race, vote for Ron Kirk."

The pastor's clear and unequivocal endorsement of Kirk came at the same service where the candidate himself was allowed to address the congregation and appeal for votes.

"The race is winnable," Kirk reportedly told the congregation. "If you go vote, the polls don't matter."

The second incident of church electioneering occurred in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. The Washington Post reported that From the Heart Church Ministries hosted a pre-election campaign appearance by the Democratic candidate for governor at which the pastor issued an appeal to the congregation to vote Democratic.

According to the newspaper, gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Kennedy Townsend visited the 24,000-member congregation on November 3 as part of a campaign swing through four churches in Prince George's County.

In conjunction with the visit, the Rev. John A. Cherry, the church pastor, urged the congregation to follow a partisan course in the election two days later. Mimicking the flip of a voting booth lever, he reportedly said, "I don't care what your persuasion is, you need to pull out your Democratic finger."

"If it sounds like I'm endorsing," he added, "take it as you want to."

The IRS has a "zero tolerance" policy for violations of tax law. In 1995, the federal agency revoked the tax exemption of the Church at Pierce Creek in upstate New York after the church paid for newspaper advertisements against presidential candidate Bill Clinton in 1992. The revocation was later upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

[from an Amer. United press release]

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"As nightfall does not come all at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight. And it is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air - however slight - lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness."

— Justice William O. Douglas, US Supreme Court

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# Point/Counterpoint: The Boy Scouts of America

Should the Boy Scouts be vigorously opposed for their discrimination?

**Yes**, says **Scott Cozza**, President of Scouting For All  
(from a [Scouting For All](#) press release)

The Boy Scouts of America adopted a resolution on February 6, 2002, in which gays and atheists are deemed unfit and unacceptable role models for scout youth. Although the Boy Scouts have had an unwritten policy concerning gays, this is the first time in their 92-year history that it has become an actual resolution.

The resolution came about in response to the many individual Scout Councils who were calling for change within their organization. These Councils were fighting to maintain their right to choose their own membership and leadership, even if this included leaders and scouts who happened to be gay.

But the new resolution strikes down local authority and autonomy and in effect says that parents and volunteers cannot be responsible for choosing the best leadership for their own children. "...the BSA values cannot be subject to local option choices," the resolution reads, "but must be the same in every unit..."

It is ironic that the BSA core value of respecting diversity is not practiced within the organization. And it is a shame that the BSA National Office is turning a deaf ear to its own members.

Scouting for All, and their supporters who struggle for human rights, salute the bravery of the councils in standing up to the National Office. It is no small thing to risk getting kicked out of an organization you love. But denouncing bigotry and prejudice is really what the Scout Oath and Law are about. These councils recognized that and did the right thing.

If the BSA wants to continue to symbolize bigotry, let it do so, but without the support of Americans and individual Scout Councils who oppose bigotry and discrimination. To this end Scouting For All will continue to work for change by asking the United Way to adhere to their anti-discrimination standards, and by asking that public schools not allow the BSA to recruit in our schools until they include all of our children in a democratic fashion. We will also work to ensure that local and national government agencies – including the White House, really rethink their support of an organization that leaves our gay and atheist children behind as well as gay and atheist leaders. Scouting for All also urges President Bush to step down as the Honorary President of the BSA. He stated in his State of the Union Address, "to leave no child behind." Let's see if our President will stand by his own words.

– Scott Cozza

**No**, says **Blair Scott**, President of the Mobile Atheists  
(from a [Secular South](#) website article)

I'm going to walk away from the crowd and stand on my own. As an atheist I stand on my own a lot, anyway, but now I'm going to stand against my fellow atheists.

In case you haven't heard, there is an atheist Scout in Washington that is being expelled from the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) because of his atheism. The Scout, Darrell Lambert, has vowed to fight the decision to expel him.

Of course this news story has exploded in every Internet forum and web page designed for atheists and the atheists are screaming "discrimination." Of course, they are right, the BSA is discriminating.

The BSA discriminates against atheists and homosexuals. But what's new? The BSA has always discriminated and will more than likely continue to do so in the future.

So how am I standing alone against the other atheists in the country? I'm supporting the BSA in their decision and their right to hold members to their own requirements and standards. I'm opposed to Mr. Lambert fighting the decision.

The BSA is a club; a large club, but a club nonetheless. Clubs, by their nature, are exclusionary. Clubs set standards for their members and have requirements that must be met in order to be a member. To be a member of a club you must meet the membership requirements. We may not personally agree with those requirements, as I don't agree with the BSA policy, but it is the right of the club to set those requirements.

If you become a member without meeting those requirements and it is discovered that you do not meet said requirements, then why would you be shocked at being expelled?

The Supreme Court has already ruled in favor of the BSA in July of 2000 in the case styled *Boy Scouts of America and Mammoth Council v. James Dale*. The court ruled that the BSA was a private organization that had the right to set standards and requirements for its members. Mr. Dale was a homosexual and was expelled when the BSA discovered his homosexuality.

While I think the BSA is wrong for discriminating, I fully support their right as a private organization to do so, and the Supreme Court agrees.

The court stated that, "We are not, as we must not be, guided by our views of whether the Boy Scouts' teachings with respect to homosexual conduct are right or wrong; public or judicial disapproval of a tenet of an organization's expression does not justify the State's effort to compel the organization to accept members where such acceptance would derogate from the organization's expressive message." (continued on page 7)

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## Atheists and the Boy Scouts (*continued*)

Take note fellow atheists, the state cannot force clubs to accept members that go against that club's membership standards and requirements. Replace the word homosexual with atheist in the court's statement and it still holds true.

So what's next? Will the black community sue in order to become members of the KKK? Will Italians sue to become members of the Philippino-American Club? Will Caucasians sue to become members of the Future Black Leaders of America?

Fighting to force private organizations and clubs to be non-exclusionary is a waste of time, money and resources and, in my view, a violation of the club's rights. Efforts to fight the BSA are misplaced.

Where the fight should be is to ensure that federal and state funding of discriminatory organizations is not occurring and that public school recruiting is not taking place.

The BSA should be excluded from public schools because of their discriminatory practices. The only private organizations that should be allowed to recruit in schools are those that will accept any student as a member, regardless of religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

The BSA should be excluded from all government funding lists because of their discriminatory practices. Of course private organizations should be getting their

money from the private sector, anyway; discriminatory or not.

Don't fight the BSA - fight the government's use of your tax dollars to support them. The government should not endorse any group that discriminates.

Can you imagine the outrage if the government gave money to the KKK or if the KKK were allowed to recruit in public schools?

What is the difference between discrimination against blacks by the KKK and discrimination against atheists by the BSA? Answer: no difference.

Discrimination is discrimination, pure and simple. Government funding of discrimination should cease. Let the private organizations discriminate - that is their right, but don't fund it with my tax dollars.

My recommendation to Mr. Lambert and others like him who have been kicked out of private organizations is not to fight the organization, but to fight the government sponsorship of the discriminatory practices that got them expelled.

My recommendation to everyone is to not join a club or organization where you don't meet the standards and requirements for membership. If you can't find a club that fits you then do like I did and form your own; I formed The Mobile Atheists for atheist Mobilians.

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## Oops, He Did It Again

Here's an *In Our Opinion* editorial by the editors of the Anniston Star newspaper.

It was published on October 21, 2002, and is reprinted here by permission.

**J**ust when we thought that the Rev. Jerry Falwell had learned to think before offering opinions guaranteed to offend a significant segment of the population (and embarrass erstwhile friends), here he goes again.

Recall, after Sept. 11, how Falwell went on the Rev. Pat Robertson's TV show and suggested that the terrorist attacks were God's way of punishing us for allowing abortionists, feminists, homosexuals, civil libertarians and such to enjoy the constitutional rights he feels should be reserved for conservative Christians like himself. And recall how, when no small number of Americans (many of them conservative Christians) pointed out to him that it was unlikely that God would kill some 3000 people to teach such a lesson, he recanted and apologized to the nation.

And what did he learn from the

experience? Apparently not much, for recently he explained to an interviewer for CBS's 60 Minutes that his reading of Muslim and non-Muslim writers had led him to the conclusion that "Muhammad was a terrorist."

In the face of protests from Christians and Muslims around the world Falwell began to back down and modify his position, pointing out that he believed that "most Muslims are people of peace and want peace and tranquility for their families and abhor terrorism." But then he added that "Islam, like most faiths, has a fringe of radicals who carry on bloodshed wherever they are. They do not represent Islam."

What the Rev. Falwell does not seem to realize is that such an apology, if apology it is, only makes matters worse. If he believes that Muhammad was a terrorist, and if he

believes that terrorists are only a fringe of Islamic radicals, logic leads to the conclusion that Falwell considers Muhammad, the Prophet of God, not to represent Islam.

Not only does this reveal a profound ignorance of the history and theology of one of the world's great religions, but it suggests finding a common ground on which both Christians and Muslims can stand is not high on the Falwell list of priorities.

Maybe it is time for someone close to Falwell, someone with a little more diplomacy, discretion and decency, to suggest to the reverend that he should declare a moratorium on comments on topics pertaining to matters of religion and politics.

And in return, we will declare a moratorium on comments on the Rev. Jerry Falwell.



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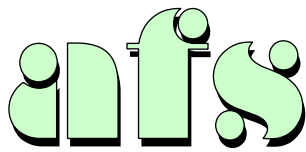
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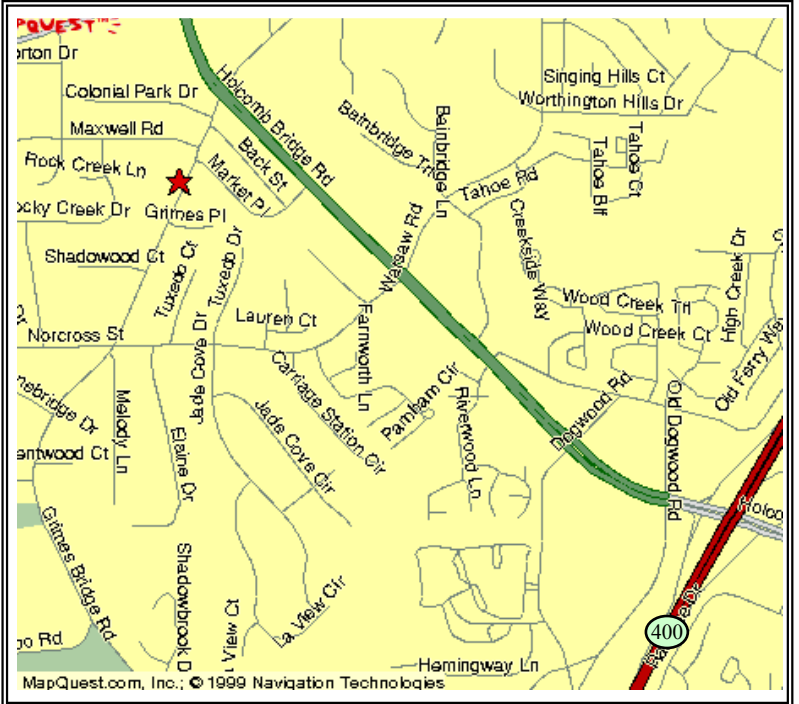
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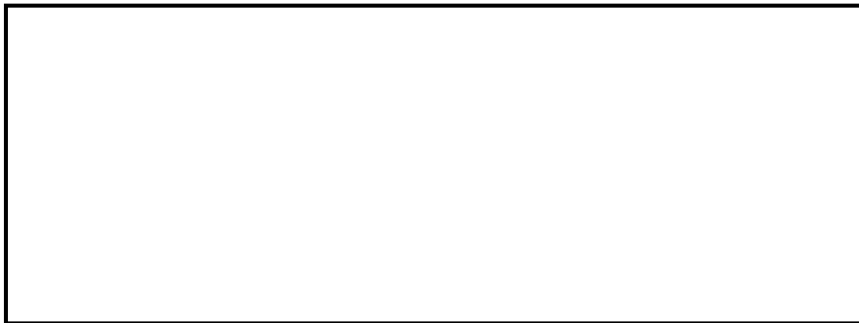
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Sunday, November 10  
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**This Month's Speaker:  
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